United Nations A/67/PV.46

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

46th plenary meeting
Friday, 30 November 2012, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/67/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/364)

Draft resolutions (A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal, Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce draft resolutions A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20.

Mr. Diallo (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (*spoke in French*): Yesterday, 29 November, we celebrated the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. As President Mahmoud Abbas recalled, that date was no accident. It has strong historical resonance. It was on 29 November 1947 that 33 Member States, meeting in the Borough of Queens in what had been a World's Fair pavilion, decided to partition Palestine. Of the two States they envisaged, one was created and became a Member of the United Nations. Yesterday, at its 44th meeting, the General Assembly decided to perfect its undertaking by recognizing the other entity as a State.

Thanks to the overwhelming support of the international community, the journey of the Palestinian people to freedom and to the building of an independent State took a new turn. Although the path has been difficult and the sacrifices many, the efforts have not been in vain. That overwhelming vote is proof that the perseverance of the Palestinians in working towards a negotiated settlement is the best guarantee for peace in the region of the Middle East. It is therefore with pride that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People sees the delegation of Palestine take its rightful seat in the General Assembly with the status of a non-member observer State.

I would also like to congratulate the Palestinian people and their leaders, especially President Mahmoud Abbas, for the courage and patience they have shown. To the Palestinian people, who pursued their dream despite hardships and other privations, I wish harmony and prosperity. But more than anything, I wish them a new perspective for peace with Israel and all the peoples of the region.

On behalf of the Committee, I would also like to thank all members who voted for resolution 67/19. It is an important victory for all the forces of peace and can contribute to political modernization in the region for the benefit of all of its peoples.

I would now like to introduce to the Assembly the four draft resolutions adopted by the Committee and circulated under this agenda item, namely, draft resolutions A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The first three draft resolutions concern the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat and the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information. They reaffirm the important mandates entrusted to those entities by the General Assembly. As in the past, the Committee will ensure the rational use of the resources made available to it. Naturally, the three draft resolutions have been updated.

The fourth draft resolution, A/67/L.20, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", reiterates the position of the General Assembly with regard to the essential elements of such a settlement and includes references to the developments of the past year.

The four draft resolutions that I have just introduced outline positions, mandates and programmes that are of particular importance at the present crucial juncture. While the draft resolutions on a peaceful settlement and the special information programme traditionally enjoy overwhelming support from members, the voting on the draft resolutions concerning the Committee and the Division, in which a sizeable group of members abstains, could be improved.

Advocating for the coexistence of two States means supporting the only body set up by the General Assembly with that goal, namely, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The Committee recalls that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with regard to the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner, in accordance with international legitimacy. In pursuing our common objectives, the Committee counts on the cooperation of all members. Consequently, I hope that the General Assembly will vote in favour of these four draft resolutions with a majority that speaks of the correctness of the goals they are pursuing.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malta, Mr. Christopher Grima, in his capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce the report of the Committee.

Mr. Grima (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: Allow me, at the outset, to join previous speakers in congratulating the delegation of Palestine on having been granted non-member observer State status in the General Assembly.

It is an honour for me, in my capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce to the General Assembly the annual report of the Committee, which is contained in document A/67/35. Allow me to summarize each section of the report.

After the introduction, the report outlines, in chapters II and III, the mandate entrusted to the Committee by the General Assembly and contains information on the organization of the Committee's work during the year.

In chapter IV, the report reviews the situation relating to the question of Palestine as monitored by the Committee and contains a detailed factual account of developments that have taken place in the period under review, which ended on 7 October. The most recent events will be reflected in the next report.

Chapter V contains the action taken by the Committee, including the Chairman's participation in General Assembly and Security Council debates, statements issued by the Committee and its Bureau and the continued dialogue between the Committee and members of intergovernmental organizations. Chapter V also reports on the various international meetings and conferences organized by the Committee, as well as other mandated activities carried out by the Division for Palestinian Rights.

Chapter VI provides an overview of the work done over the year by the Department of Public Information pursuant to resolution 66/16, of 30 November 2011.

The last chapter contains the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee, in which the Committee expresses its concern that the momentum towards the two-State solution appears to have dissipated due to Israel's continued expansion of its illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and its refusal to commit to the long-standing parameters of the peace process. The Committee expresses its view that progress on the Palestinian status at the United Nations will generate a new dynamic in the peace process and help safeguard the two-State solution, as will the recognition of the State of Palestine by additional Member States.

The Committee calls on the international community to take serious and concrete action that will compel Israel to stop its illegal settlement activities and to genuinely commit to ending its 45-year military occupation of the Palestinian territory and to making peace. The Committee also calls on members of the Security Council to undertake a mission to the region to examine the situation at first hand and to contribute tangibly to the efforts to advance a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole.

In addition, the Committee calls on donors to meet their prior commitments and provide emergency aid to the Palestinian people. The Committee calls on all Palestinian factions to unite behind the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas for a good-faith implementation of national reconciliation agreements, which is a prerequisite for the establishment of a viable Palestinian State.

The Committee expresses its deep concern about the ongoing violence and the gross violations of humanitarian and human rights law and reiterates its condemnation of all attacks against civilians, including rocket fire from Gaza, air strikes on populated areas and settler violence. It calls on the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to act urgently to guarantee the protection of civilians.

The Committee reiterates that any sustainable recovery of the Palestinian economy requires the dismantlement of the Israeli occupation and its associated regime of settlements, checkpoints, the separation wall, demolitions, land confiscations and expulsions. Those have been on the rise, with the worst abuses occurring in East Jerusalem and in Area C. In that regard, the Committee calls for the transfer of additional territories in Area C to the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, as envisaged in the Oslo Accords.

The Committee will focus its programme of international meetings and conferences in 2013 on widening international support for the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, and to return to their homes and property. It will also seek to strengthen international support for the permanent status negotiations and contribute to the creation of a favourable international atmosphere for their conduct in good faith. The Committee also supports global campaigns to challenge Israeli impunity and promote the concept of Israeli accountability for its actions towards the Palestinian people.

The Committee will continue to highlight the plight of the most disadvantaged Palestinians, such as the Palestine refugees, Palestinians living in Gaza and Palestinian political prisoners, and to mobilize support for Palestinian institution-building and all other efforts to facilitate the viability of the Palestinian State. The Committee will pay particular attention to the inclusion and empowerment of women and youth and their organizations in that process.

The Committee will continue to encourage civil society partners to work with their national Governments, parliaments and other institutions with a view to gaining their full support for the work of the United Nations, including that of the Committee, on the question of Palestine. It will continue to assess its programme of cooperation with civil society and consult them on ways to enhance their contribution. The Committee will also strive to further develop cooperation with parliamentarians and their umbrella organizations.

The Committee requests the Division for Palestinian Rights to continue its substantive and secretariat support, the programme of research, monitoring and publications and other informational activities. It should pay special attention to the continued development of the "Question of Palestine" website and the use of web-based social information networks, such as Facebook and Twitter. The Committee also requests the Division to further develop the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority and to continue to organize the annual observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Finally, the Committee expresses its view that the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has made an important contribution to informing the media and public opinion of the relevant issues, and requests the continuation of the programme, with the necessary flexibility, as warranted by developments relevant to the question of Palestine.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that the report that I have just introduced will be of assistance to the General Assembly in its deliberations on the question of Palestine.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina is proud to have been one of the 70 sponsors of resolution 67/19, which was adopted with a view to recognizing Palestine as a non-member observer State in the United Nations, because it represents a historic step by the international community with respect to the Palestinian people and the Palestinian State, recognized as such by 132 Members of the United Nations, including the Argentine Republic. However, that resolution is only one additional step towards the long overdue decision that the Organization has yet to take, namely, Palestine's admission as a Member State of the United Nations.

The requirements for the admission of new Members are clearly established in paragraph 2 of Article 4 of the Charter of the United Nations, which represents the consensus of the international community and enshrines the principle of the sovereign equality of all States — a necessary condition to promote, protect and ensure international peace and security, the full force of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law and true democracy.

On 23 September 2011, the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, presented to the United Nations Palestine's request for admission as a full Member and signed a declaration by which he accepted the relevant obligations under the Charter (see A/66/PV.19). But, although in November of the same year UNESCO approved Palestine's admission as a member, the General Assembly was still not able to take the decision to admit Palestine into the Organization, because considerations not related to the requirements established in the Charter meant that the Security Council provided no recommendation to the General Assembly.

Based on its firm belief in the sovereign equality of States, Argentina, from the inception of the Organization, has been clear in its support for the universality of the United Nations, so as to include all States that meet the requirements set out in the Charter of the United Nations — the binding instrument representing the covenant of peaceful coexistence of the international community.

Likewise, it is worth recalling that Argentina advocated since the founding of the Organization that the right of veto of the permanent members of the Security Council could not be exercised with respect to the admission of new Members. It should also be recalled that even the International Court of Justice, in an advisory opinion supported by Argentina, determined that the conditions for the admission of a Member were exhaustive and that.

> "[t]he political character of an organ cannot release it from the observance of the treaty provisions established by the Charter when they constitute limitations on its powers or criteria for its judgment".

The Organization cannot ignore Palestine's statehood status in the context of the exercise of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people.

Argentina was not alone in supporting the resolution adopted. The heads of State and Government of the Southern Common Market expressed their support for the application of the State of Palestine to acquire the status granted to it yesterday by the General Assembly.

Finally, the international community has definitely become aware of the value of that which should be considered the first right of peoples, namely, the right to peace. The Palestinian and Israeli peoples have the right to live in peace. My country, Argentina, and the Assembly, which is the multilateral arena par excellence, clearly support that right. Therefore, as the President of Argentina, Mrs. Cristina Fernández, has said:

> "Today we reiterate our conviction of the need to continue the negotiation process in order to achieve a peaceful, just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict. that contemplates an independent and viable Palestinian State."

No people chooses war. All peoples wish to live in peace.

Mr. Sin Son Ho (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): First of all, my delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made at the 45th meeting by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation considers the convening of today's plenary meeting on agenda item 37, entitled "Question of Palestine", to be very timely, as it coincides with the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The establishment of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, 30 years ago, was an important occasion that

reflected the aspiration of the international community to an early solution of the Palestinian question.

On this important occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, my delegation joins the international community in extending its unwavering support to, and solidarity with, the Palestinian people's just cause of regaining its territory and establishing an independent State. My delegation was a sponsor of the resolution and yesterday it aligned with the majority of Member States in voting in favour of resolution 67/19, on Palestine's status. We once again welcome and congratulate Palestine on having received an absolute majority in recognition of its statehood at the United Nations.

Unfortunately, it is very regrettable that the Palestinian issue has not yet been resolved, despite the unreserved support and efforts of the international community. Israel continues its aggressive policy of illegal occupation of the Arab territories, expanding settlements, blockading the Gaza Strip and indiscriminately killing civilians, thereby challenging the international community. Furthermore, Israel, the occupying Power, recently escalated military attacks against the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip, killing many innocent civilians, including women and children.

Nevertheless, the Security Council, whose main responsibility is to protect international peace and security, has turned its face away from Israeli atrocities without taking any appropriate measures. That is a typical expression of the United States double standard, whereby it takes sides with Israel, seriously damaging the Council's credibility. We strongly denounce the unpardonable Israeli criminal acts of wantonly violating the sovereignty of Palestine and seriously disturbing peace and security in the Middle East.

Establishing the independent State of Palestine is an inalienable sovereign right of the Palestinian people. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea recognized Palestine as an independent sovereign State in 1988 and established full diplomatic relations with it. Since then, it has extended unreserved support and solidarity to the Palestinian people's struggle to establish their independent State. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue its unwavering support for the Palestinian and Arab people and will stand firm with them in their just cause.

If the Palestinian issue is to be settled and lasting peace is to be maintained in the Middle East, the aggressive and hostile Israeli acts against the Palestinian people must be terminated and the Palestinian people's legitimate national right to establish an independent State must be realized. The legitimate status of Palestine as a State Member of the United Nations should be granted as early as possible, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of peace and security. It is also the view of my delegation that the Security Council should give due attention to Palestinian membership, which is now on the international agenda, so that it may be realized without further delay, since more than two thirds of the Member States have already officially recognized Palestine as a State.

My delegation avails itself of this opportunity to reaffirm its unvarying support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just cause of regaining their legitimate national rights, including the establishment of an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

Mrs. Mørch Smith (Norway): Yesterday, an overwhelming majority of the Member States voted in favour of upgrading Palestine to non-member observer State in the General Assembly. That is a milestone, and truly historic. It is a tribute to those who have chosen the path of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through peaceful and diplomatic means. It is also a tribute to the Partition Plan, adopted by the General Assembly 65 years ago, and to the two-State solution

Resolution 67/19, adopted yesterday, was not a unilateral step by the Palestinians. The resolution was carefully balanced and sends a clear message that the Palestine Liberation Organization and President Abbas are genuinely committed to resuming negotiations on the basis of the two-State solution. Time is more than ripe for all Palestinians to embrace that nonviolent approach. A unified Palestine will stand stronger, and President Abbas' clear reaffirmation that Palestine will adhere strictly to the Charter of the United Nations and respect fundamental human rights principles is welcomed.

Yesterday's decision also underscores that the international community recognizes that Palestinian institutions have passed the threshold for a functioning State. Norway is committed to continued efforts to empower Palestinian institutions. However, the current

crisis in the Palestinian economy is of great concern. The financial imbalance in the Palestinian economy is in danger of becoming chronic and will be increasingly difficult to resolve if no adequate measures are taken.

It is in the interest of us all to secure a viable economy in Palestine. The task of international donors will not be completed until the Palestinian economy can prosper and fiscal independence can be ensured. An economic collapse will endanger institutional progress and severely exacerbate the welfare of the Palestinian people. That could strengthen political forces that are not committed to a peaceful settlement and reject negotiations as the way forward.

The occupation severely hampers economic development. A self-sustaining Palestinian economy cannot be achieved as long as the occupation remains in place and illegal settlements continue to expand, encircling East Jerusalem and undermining the very concept of a two-State solution.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The ceasefire in Gaza is fragile and deserves our full support in order to make it durable. Decisions to lift restrictions on goods, construction items and personnel should be taken without further delay and in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). Such initiatives would make the ceasefire more robust and help us move forward towards normalization in the Gaza Strip. That will also have a strengthening effect on moderate political forces and will weaken those who choose violence. Egypt's key role in achieving a ceasefire agreement is very encouraging.

While we may have times of quiet, times where hostilities are absent, we will not achieve true peace unless the parties, through negotiations and compromises, reach a political settlement. Yesterday's result is encouraging. It should be interpreted as a call for action and not as an excuse to yet again postpone negotiations. Clear parameters defining the basis for negotiations are key elements for a successful outcome. It is also imperative that unilateral acts on the ground, which undermine confidence and take the parties further from negotiations, be avoided. President Abbas, in his speech at the 44th meeting yesterday, underscored that he will act responsibly and positively in the next steps. That should be respected.

Regardless of how we cast our vote yesterday, we all need to come together and bring forward the efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through negotiations. Those negotiations should start immediately.

Mr. Faizal (Maldives): On this historic occasion in 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), on the partition of Palestine, thus creating one of the most complex and elusive challenges that the modern world has faced so far. Yet again, we find ourselves in this very Hall, lamenting the lack of progress in a now moribund peace process and decrying the deficiency of international political will to help realize what was conceived all those years ago — a story of two States, a world where both Palestine and Israel could coexist, within secure and recognized borders.

As we mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I wish to reiterate the solidarity of my Government and that of all Maldivians with the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination. Even in this difficult hour, as smoke rises from the ruins of Gaza and the grave humanitarian crisis is once again laid bare for the world to see, the Maldives will not waver in its steadfast support for Palestine, nor will it retreat from condemning the serious injustices committed in the occupied territories as recently as last week.

The Maldives welcomes the statement by the President of the State of Palestine, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, delivered yesterday afternoon in the General Assembly (see A/67/PV.44). We commend his extraordinary vision and his leadership of the Palestinian people in the face of an endless struggle for freedom.

My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts in the compilation of his report (A/67/364), in accordance with Assembly resolution 66/17. We would also like to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its report (A/67/35) and for its commendable achievements over the past years.

The observations in the reports to the General Assembly once again demonstrate that a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine and the wider Arab-Israeli conflict lies in a two-State solution — two States living side by side on the basis of pre-1967 borders, with Jerusalem as their shared capital. They also show that efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement are being quickly eroded by the lack of trust between

the two sides for resuming direct negotiations and an alarming lack of confidence in the peace process itself.

The Maldives strongly backed the initiative by the Palestinians last year for full membership in the United Nations. We did so fully adhering to the view that it was long overdue for Palestine to be an equal among nations and to join an international family that has passionately supported the struggle of all Palestinians. Furthermore, we hold a strong belief in the conviction that their right to self-determination must be fully realized. Statehood will bring the sense of leadership, responsibility and obligation that surrounds the business of governance. The restoration of Palestinian rights would also alleviate to some extent their socioeconomic problems — a crumbling infrastructure and decades of psychological and material damage endured under occupation.

While an independent, viable and sovereign State of Palestine is the ultimate objective, we believe that granting the status of non-member observer State in the General Assembly is a landmark achievement. My delegation was pleased to join the list of sponsors of resolution 67/19, entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations", which was adopted with an overwhelming level of support and endorsement by the United Nations membership.

My Government hails the ceasefire that recently came into effect between Hamas and Israel. We commend the Egyptian Government, the United States and the United Nations for their exemplary leadership in preventing a further escalation of the crisis. Military strikes on highly populated areas in Gaza took the lives of many innocent civilians, including women and children, adding to the layers of destruction and rubble left by years of hardship, the illegal Israeli blockade and ground invasions of recent memory. We also call upon Hamas to cease all rocket attacks on the State of Israel and to respect and uphold the ceasefire agreement so as to avoid further bloodshed and suffering.

Israel's expansion of illegal settlements undermines peace efforts and is at the crux of the current stalemate faced by the global community. Despite international outrage and multiple calls to cease all settlement activity immediately, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to operate with total impunity, making a mockery of international humanitarian and human rights law. The forced eviction of Palestinians and the demolition of their homes to make way for Israeli settlers could not be described as anything other than an outright illegal seizure of territory by an occupying Power. In the pursuit of meaningful negotiations and a lasting peace, the onus is on Israel, as the occupying Power, to demonstrate its compliance with its obligations under international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, to cease all illegal settlement activity in the occupied territories.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the commitment of the Government of Maldives to support all international efforts to seek a just and comprehensive settlement to the question of Palestinian statehood, including all final status issues. The urgency of achieving that objective is evident, as the Palestinians find themselves surrounded by Arab freedom movements. Both fight for common goals — a sacred belief that their destiny should be squarely in their own hands, and a better world for future generations. Both also believe that having the responsibility to govern would bring pragmatism and accountability for their own actions. The resolution adopted yesterday is an important step in that direction. It is time for the Palestinians to achieve statehood and to decide their future free from occupation, intimidation and aggression.

Mr. Kommasith (Lao People's Democratic Republic): My delegation endorses the statement made at the 45th meeting by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Just yesterday, we adopted resolution 67/19, according Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations. My country was a sponsor of that resolution, and I take this opportunity to congratulate the Palestinian people on that auspicious occasion. As many of us have said, it is a critical issue of global justice and a defining test for the Organization to move in that direction. Member States must therefore further work towards the Palestinians' being able to realize their inalienable rights, including the rights of return and self-determination, as well as their earnest aspirations to freedom, prosperity, peace and justice in an independent, sovereign State of Palestine, based on the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

We must acknowledge that the Palestinian people's acquisition of a new status and new rights in the United Nations as a recognized State does not negate their firm commitment to resolve the conflict through dialogue and peaceful means. We are well aware of their suffering and struggle over the past several decades,

without any glimpse of hope, while the international community could not take decisive action at the level where it mattered most.

Over time, we have seen the growing ability of the Palestinian Authority to establish the necessary institutional foundations for the international recognition of Palestinian statehood, as endorsed by all major international organizations and institutions. We commend the Palestinians for making that heroic effort, despite the grave obstacles and challenges imposed on them.

The continued illegal settlement activity and destruction of properties, homes and economic institutions in the occupied land not only cause the deterioration of the already critical socioeconomic situation that the Palestinian population face, but also constitute a breach of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, as well as impeding the peace process and opportunities for negotiation. Therefore, those provocative acts should stop immediately.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic wishes to see a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, in keeping with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Quartet road map, which envisages a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace with the Jewish State of Israel, within secure and internationally recognized borders. We therefore call upon the parties to resume and accelerate direct peace negotiations towards the conclusion of a final peaceful settlement on that basis.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic has long recognized the State of Palestine, and I wish to reaffirm its consistent support for the Palestinian people in attaining their long-delayed goal of a viable, peaceful and prosperous State of Palestine that is a full-fledged Member of the United Nations. I take this opportunity to commend the role and work of United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to assist millions of Palestinian people in need over all these many years amid multiple difficulties. We also wish the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People every success in its noble endeavour for a peaceful, just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

Mr. Llorenty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Plurinational State of Bolivia aligns itself with the statement made at the 45th meeting by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Bolivian Government — the Bolivian State — stands by the Palestinian people's cause and supports the exercise of their rights. We also support the establishment of the Palestinian State, based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We support the decision of our Palestinian brothers and sisters regarding their inalienable right to self-determination.

Yesterday was a historic day. The General Assembly fulfilled its incontrovertible moral, political and legal obligation to guarantee recognition of the Palestinian State. That historic step will without doubt reaffirm faith in the Assembly and in the Organization.

Bolivia not only resolutely supported resolution 67/19 adopted yesterday; it also denounces the crimes that Israel is committing against the Palestinian people. Bolivia denounces Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. Bolivia denounces the illegal settlements that are multiplying in Palestinian territory. Bolivia denounces the construction of that unspeakable wall. Bolivia denounces the violations of international humanitarian law in that part of the world.

We hope that the resolution adopted yesterday by this great Assembly will allow an end to the bombings, attacks and assassinations and allow the building of the Palestinian State, coexisting peaceably with the Israeli State. Bolivia applauds the Assembly's effort and work in this matter.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*):

"Both peoples are fully ripe for independence. We are not here to give lessons in organization to two peoples in their infancy, two peoples whose destinies are just beginning. The Jewish effort in Palestine is, in many respects, exemplary ... And the ability of the Arabs to shape their own destiny by their work, their initiative and their courage is shown not only by their present achievements but by their glorious past. Those of us who are voting for [the resolution] are not voting against either of these two peoples, against either of those two sectors of social reality in Palestine. We are voting for both of them, for their progress, their

civic development, their advancement within the community of nations" (*A/PV.125, p. 1350*).

Those sentences were not written for this occasion. They are from an explanation of vote delivered by the representative of Uruguay, Ambassador Rodríguez Fabregat, exactly 65 years ago, on 26 November 1947, when the General Assembly was to vote on resolution 181 (II), which approved the Partition Plan and the two-State solution.

Sixty-five years after the adoption of that resolution, which Uruguay clearly supported, we are convinced that there cannot be a solution to the peace process in the Middle East without the existence of two strong States. For that reason we are fully confident that the equally clear support that we gave yesterday to resolution 67/19 does nothing to impede efforts to resume the peace process but on the contrary, it stimulates and complements it.

Uruguay supports the right of the States of Israel and Palestine to live in peace, within safe and recognized borders, in an environment of renewed cooperation, free from any threats or acts that disturb peace, including terrorist acts. We recognize that the Palestinian people have a legitimate right to live in a safe, robust State that is economically viable and at peace with Israel. However, we know that nothing can replace bilateral dialogue and that it is through such dialogue that a solution must be found to the various outstanding issues. It is therefore crucial that negotiations be resumed as soon as possible.

Full respect for international law and its principles, for international humanitarian law, for international human rights law and for United Nations resolutions is the key to facilitating a peaceful, fair and lasting solution to the conflict. That statement, though obvious, cannot be taken for granted, particularly when considering the fragility of the current situation in the region.

We hope that the adoption of the draft resolution on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (A/67/L.17) will contribute to easing the tension that prevails today in the region, especially in the Gaza Strip, where we must establish conditions for humanitarian assistance and for respect for the human rights of the civilian population, to prevent further suffering. But above all, we hope for a speedy resumption of the peace process, so that, once and for all, the wish that Israel and Palestine can live in peace can be fulfilled. Along that path, Israel and Palestine will find Uruguay in the same place it was 65 years ago — that of a friendly country and a constructive interlocutor that wishes only peace and well-being for both peoples.

Mr. Al-Sallal (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation wishes to thank the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We would also like to thank the Chair of the Committee for his efforts to promote the Palestinian cause. We wish to take this opportunity to express our joy with regard to the commemoration today of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It is a resounding proof of the legitimacy of their struggle and their right to resist occupation and establish an independent State on their own national soil with East Jerusalem as its capital.

More than six decades have passed since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly. We regret that, for all that time, the Palestinian people have been deprived of their rights as a result of the terrible escalation of Israeli violence, the settlement expansion and the infringement of the rights of unarmed Palestinians. In addition, there have also been the killing of activists, the oppression of prisoners and the ongoing attempts to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque by the Israelis, all of which requires that the United Nations play a stronger and more effective leading role, without omitting the role of the United Nations agencies, which must also deal with Israel's refusal to respect international resolutions. Such a refusal denies any chances of peaceful or pragmatic solutions and initiatives.

The international community has not exerted pressure on Israel, and that is the main missing factor impeding the implementation of international justice. It undermines the role of the United Nations and the requirements of international law. It also impedes justice, liberty and the implementation of international resolutions.

From this rostrum, we fully support the admission of the State of Palestine as a fully fledged State Member of the United Nations. We reiterate the legality of that request and the need to guarantee the rights of the Palestinian people, in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. We call upon the Security Council to respond positively to the request for the admission of Palestine as a fully fledged State Member of the United Nations. We commend the

Palestinian State and the Palestinian people on this historic occasion, namely the granting of non-member observer status to Palestine at the United Nations, with the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 67/19, entitled "Status of Palestine in the United Nations". The resolution's adoption coincided with the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The peace process has reached a stalemate, as the Israeli Government has continued its settlement policies, expanding into more of the occupied Palestinian territory and into Jerusalem. Israel refuses to put an end to that policy, which violates international law and relevant international resolutions and fails to meet the requirements for peace. That Israeli stubbornness has stymied the chances of achieving peace and the possibility of establishing a sovereign Palestinian State. We hold Israel fully responsible for the stalemate in those negotiations and for the settlement policy that it has adopted as an alternative to peace, even though the international community has clearly and unanimously confirmed the illegality of those settlements and the extensive damage that has been wrought as a result of the settlements on the negotiations, given the impact that they have had on the possibility of attaining a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Once again, my delegation restates that a just and comprehensive peace will only be achieved through a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territory to the borders established before 4 June 1967, and that peace requires the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, as well as the withdrawal from the Syrian Golan and from the occupied territories in southern Lebanon. To that end, we call upon the United Nations and the international community to fully shoulder their responsibilities by guaranteeing the rights of the Palestinian people and by compelling Israel to refrain from its policy of State terrorism and violence and by urging Israel to truly implement the international resolutions and regional initiatives relating to the peace process, so that peace can be forged and we can find just and comprehensive solutions allowing for the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State.

There can be no talk of peace or security or stability in the region as long as Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories continues and the crimes perpetrated as a result of the occupation continue against the Palestinian people, who are defending their existence, independence and dignity. Those crimes have severely affected Gaza. As a result of Israel's aggressions, heinous crimes have been perpetrated against innocent civilians in Gaza, against women, children and the elderly. Those acts of aggression have destroyed homes and reflect one of the worst faces of State terrorism. Those practices violate human rights, and we call upon the international community, as represented by the Security Council, to shoulder its responsibilities in order to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with the Charter, and protect the Palestinian people by guaranteeing a just and comprehensive peace in the region. Such a peace is more urgent now than ever before. Indeed, an independent Palestinian State must be established, and the root causes of the conflict must be tackled. They must be addressed by putting an end to Israel's occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories.

We call upon the Palestinian leaders to set aside their differences, close ranks and work together in order to promote comprehensive national reconciliation in Palestine, which will help strengthen security, so that the aspirations of the Palestinian people — the desire to put an end to the occupation and to establish an independent State — may be realized. They aspire to put an end to the occupation and establish a national independent State.

Gaza is under an illegal and inhumane siege that has lasted for more than five years, and is troubled by a deep economic crisis. It is also troubled by the lack of health care and social services. More than 1.7 million Palestinians are suffering in Gaza as a result of the humanitarian crisis.

The crisis requires the United Nations to fulfil its responsibilities. The international community must end the unjust blockade. Gaza must be promptly rebuilt; all crossing points must be reopened; and the suffering of the Palestinian people must be alleviated.

Ms. Al-Nussairy (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Government and people of Iraq, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to the Palestinian people and Government on their achieving non-member observer State status at the United Nations. It is a historic achievement and the first step towards full recognition of the State of Palestine. Resolution 67/19, entitled "Status of Palestinian in the United Nations", under

agenda item 37 at the sixty-seventh session, received 138 votes in favour. That shows that the international community is convinced of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and of their right to live in peace, freedom and full sovereignty, unfettered by Israeli occupation.

We are all the more proud because we were among the sponsors of the draft resolution. We have always stressed our full, unreserved solidarity with the demands by the Palestinian people for their right to self-determination and for recognition of the State of Palestine, within the pre-1967 borders. We stress the provisions of the resolution dealing with the realization by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights to self-determination and to a peaceful settlement to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, and to the resumption and acceleration of negotiations under the umbrella of the Middle East peace process.

The peace process is at a standstill, as if it were in a cul-de-sac. The economic and social situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is abysmal and continues to deteriorate because Israel refuses to freeze settlement activities and abide by the established terms of reference of the peace process. The situation of Palestine under occupation, the aggression against its land and the expulsion of Palestinians from their homes are all part of the Israeli strategy to force Palestinians to abandon their land, in order to entrench a permanent occupation. Israel continues to encroach on Palestinian land, to violate the human rights of civilians and to disregard international resolutions and the principles of the Charter.

We therefore call on the United Nations and the international community to intensify efforts to support the Palestinian people in achieving its correct full status in international forums and organizations. We call on the international community to deter the continuing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, which has led to thousands of victims, including children, women and the elderly.

Israel must put an end to its ongoing colonization of Palestinian land. Iraq, in support of the Palestinian cause and because of its deep belief in the need for the Palestinian people to enjoy full sovereignty, independence and a true life of dignity, has decided to host an international conference in Baghdad next month on Palestinian detainees, in order to consider the issue of Palestinian and Arab detainees and prisoners in Israeli occupation prisons, in implementation of the Baghdad Summit of the League of Arab States. Invitations have been issued to eminent regional and international persons to attend the upcoming conference. We reiterate our support for the Palestinian cause and hope that the Palestinian people will gain full membership in the United Nations and will live in an independent sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Ms. Gunnarsdóttir (Iceland): On behalf of the Icelandic Government, I extend warm congratulations to our Palestinian sisters and brothers. Resolution 67/19, adopted by the General Assembly yesterday, is a major step by the international community towards fulfilling a promise made a long time ago.

It is the sincere hope of the Icelandic Government that the resolution will become a turning point towards peace and that it will be used to reinvigorate efforts by both parties, as well as the international community, to negotiate all outstanding issues leading to a two-State solution with Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace and security. We also hope to see renewed efforts towards Palestinian reconciliation and for the international community to accommodate such efforts.

We welcome the broad support demonstrated by the Members of the United Nations for the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people. We call upon all Members, including Israel, to unite and embrace the momentum created by this occasion. A negotiated political solution is by far the best way to reach peace and ensure long-term security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Iceland has consistently argued for the principle of self-determination on the part of small nations. The right of a people to choose its own destiny and carve out its own future is a vitally important concept for small nations such as Iceland. It is on the basis of that principle that Iceland supports, and will continue to support, the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and freedom from occupation.

Once again, we welcome Palestine as a non-member observer State, and we look forward to the time when we will be able to salute the State of Palestine as the 194th Member State.

Ms. Lalama (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador congratulates Palestine on the overwhelming vote in its favour cast by the international community yesterday,

29 November, when the Assembly adopted resolution 67/19. Our votes were the expression of our firm commitment to finding a lasting and fair peace for the Israelis and Palestinians. That significant support shows our recognition of the historic injustice that has been done to the Palestinian people. It reaffirms their human and national rights and calls for respect for, and compliance with, international law and humanitarian law. Moreover, it also acknowledges the oppression that has been committed by the neighbouring army.

The endorsement of Palestine as an observer State represents the support of the international community for the peace process and is a strong message to the Quartet, especially the Security Council, which has covertly tolerated the protracted occupation of Palestinian territory, as proven by the recent events in Gaza.

In keeping with its principles of the right to self-determination of peoples and the peaceful settlement of disputes that are enshrined in article 416 of its Constitution, Ecuador is convinced that an independent, sovereign, democratic and viable Palestinian State is a key element in resolving the conflict. It would have positive effects for Israel's security, for the establishment of peace in the region and thus for the international community.

A just, peaceful and lasting solution can be achieved through dialogue among the parties that is based on respect for the basic norms of international law and the treaties and resolutions of the political bodies of the United Nations. In that context, my country calls upon Israel to halt the acts of individual and collective punishment and to immediately halt its military occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem by implementing Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It must also immediately end its blockade against food supplies, water, medication and basic services in the Palestinian territories.

At this new stage in history, my country calls upon the parties to sit down at the negotiating table with a sense of urgency, in order to attain the peace to which all aspire.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that Ecuador will continue to extend its firm support and solidarity to the people of Palestine and to fully support their aspirations to become a fully fledged State Member of the United Nations.

Mr. Errázuriz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): On 7 January 2011, the Government of Chile officially recognized the State of Palestine as a free, independent and sovereign State. On that basis, my delegation, in an act of justice and solidarity with the Palestinian people, voted in favour of resolution 67/19, which granted to Palestine non-member observer State status in the General Assembly, yesterday afternoon, 29 November 2012.

As stated by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile in the general debate of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, in September:

> "We strongly believe that the Palestinian people have the right to a free, sovereign and democratic State. However, we also note that the State of Israel has the right to recognized, safe and respected borders. Only in that way will Palestinians and Israelis be able to coexist and move forward in peace and harmony." (*A/67/PV.15, p. 38*)

In that context, my delegation calls for the rapid resumption of direct negotiations between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, with a view to finding a stable and lasting solution based on two independent and sovereign States.

My delegation also calls for an end to the violence that has affected so many innocent civilians — Israelis and Palestinians — and that impedes the peace process that is as necessary as it is longed for, so that they may coexist harmoniously and with good understanding as two peoples and two States, friends of Chile.

My country hopes and expects that the current ceasefire can be further strengthened by resuming the bilateral dialogue for the sake of peace.

Mr. Pham Vinh Quang (Viet Nam): At the outset, on behalf the Government and the people of Viet Nam, I would like to congratulate Palestine on being accorded non-member observer State status in the United Nations. On this occasion, Viet Nam wishes to reaffirm its principled support for the courageous struggle and rights of the Palestinian people over more than 65 years, in particular the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State.

Viet Nam recognized the State of Palestine in its early days. It co-sponsored resolution 67/19 and will support Palestine's legitimate request for full membership in the United Nations.

Viet Nam is of the view that the Arab-Israeli conflict, of which the Palestinian question is the core, can be solved only through peaceful negotiations aimed at a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution based on respect for the legitimate interests of all concerned parties, especially the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish a State of Palestine in their homeland.

Viet Nam supports all regional and international efforts to move the Middle East peace process forward and urges the parties concerned to work together to realize the agreements and thus contribute to peace and stability in the region. We call for intensified efforts by the international community, in particular the Security Council and the Quartet, to address the current political and humanitarian crisis and to promote a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Once again, the Government and people of Viet Nam reaffirm their strong support for the just cause and the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. We firmly believe that the struggle of the Palestinian people, with the support of the international community, will achieve full victory.

Mr. Momen (Bangladesh): Yesterday was a historic day. On that day, the United Nations granted Palestine the status of non-member observer State in this body. The day will be remembered as a milestone on the road to achieving full statehood for the Palestine people and peace in the Middle East. We are proud to have co-sponsored resolution 67/19, which granted that status. We are pleased to stay on the right side of history. It was not our political or strategic choice, but our moral obligation to stand by the oppressed people of Palestine in their right struggle for self-determination and independence.

The decision was taken on an auspicious day, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Sixty-five years ago on that day, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which partitioned the land of historic Palestine into two States — the State of Israel and an Arab State of Palestine. As for Palestine, statehood has evaded it for more than six decades. With the overwhelming support that the resolution received, we can genuinely hope that Palestine will soon enjoy full membership in the United Nations and perform as a sovereign and active Member, like any other nation. We regret that some delegations could not support this historic decision, which is a step towards peace and security in the Middle East.

We are convinced that the new status will provide much-needed impetus to the stalled peace process, contrary to what some apprehend. The progress on Palestinian status at the United Nations will generate a new dynamism in the peace process and uphold the two-State solution espoused by the international community.

Some delegations argued that the status should have been decided through negotiations between the two parties, not by this multilateral body. History does not support them. Bangladesh is a case in point. My country came into being through struggle for self-determination. We proceeded in a similar fashion in this multilateral forum. First, we received the approval of the General Assembly, and eventually came the endorsement of the Security Council. Bangladesh emerged as a responsible and proud member of the community of nations by that multilateral move. The country of Israel, which objected to this General Assembly resolution, was founded in the land of Palestine through a United Nations resolution, not by any bilateral negotiations.

The past year has been characterized by the stalemate in the peace process and the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. There has been no sign of the peace negotiations resuming. Israel continues to refuse to freeze its settlement activity and adhere to other terms of reference of the peace process. A Palestinian State cannot emerge out of bilateral negotiations in such a scenario. The mindset of the leadership must change. The people of Palestine languish under unilateral Israeli occupation, unilateral blockade and unilateral closures, day after day, year after year. They are left with no choice but to approach this body and seek whatever redress is possible.

The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/67/35) and the report of the Secretary-General (A/67/364) reflect, yet again, the appalling human rights and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. We regret that repeated appeals of the international community to improve the deteriorating conditions of the Palestinian people remain unheeded. The illegal separation wall continues to divide and isolate communities, destroying livelihoods and preventing hundreds of thousands access to their jobs, families, markets, schools and hospitals. Israel continues to build

the wall on West Bank land, contrary to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (see A/ES-10/273). Walls are not a solution. Echoing President Ronald Reagan, I ask that these walls be torn down in order to have sustainable peace and security.

Gaza's borders have been subject to a regime of closure that is without precedent anywhere on the planet Earth. The quality of life of the Palestinians had already diminished to subsistence level. The periodic escalation of violence only leads to further desperation and despair. The question is: Is Israel doing this purposefully, to generate fear, fury and distress among Palestinians? The recent attacks in Gaza were, yet again, flagrant violations of international law by the occupying Power, Israel, in utter disregard for international outcry. The question is: Will not such acts generate more hatred and foment further polarization and extremism? It is time to review and reflect and make strategic choices for a better future for both peoples.

One issue that deserves the most serious attention is the continued construction of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. The international community has made repeated calls to cease such activities, and Israel has, time and again, expressed its commitment to do so. The settlements present an existential threat to the viability of a future Palestinian State. They are contrary to international law and the road map, and they must cease. The International Court of Justice described the violation by Israel of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination as the violation of an obligation *erga omnes*. If we are serious about peace in the Middle East, we must exert collective pressure on Israel to stop expansion of the illegal settlements and dismantle the existing ones, in line with its obligations under article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The upgraded status of Palestine is a small step toward amending an historical injustice. Much work lies ahead to create the conditions that will allow the resumption of meaningful negotiations and preserve the viability of the two-State solution. Our goal remains realizing the inalienable and legitimate aspiration of the Palestinian people by creating an independent, viable, contiguous and sovereign State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel consistent with relevant Security Council resolutions and in accordance with the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of land for peace.

That needs our collective resolve. Otherwise, peace, hope and prosperity of the peoples in the Holy Land will remain as elusive as ever. Let us hope that the adoption of resolution 67/19 will lead to better understanding and urgency between Israel and Palestine to restart the stalled peace negotiations for achieving a lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Yesterday, at the 44th meeting, the General Assembly voted to recognize Palestine as a country deserving of life. Today we endorse the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to life, dignity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and self-determination.

The vote that we witnessed yesterday was a manifestation of the voice of history as a symphony of peace, independence and freedom. At the same time, it served as a cry in the face of injustice, aggression, occupation and racism. How fortunate it was that the vote took place only a few days after the barbaric aggression launched by Israel against the Palestinian people in Gaza. The echo reverberating from New York affirmed that the voice of justice is louder than the cry of injustice and the symphony of peace is softer than the drums of war, and that the flowers of freedom will not be crushed under the tanks of occupation.

The people of Mecca and Medina longingly look towards the Holy City of Jerusalem, awaiting the day that the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque will be released from its prison and Jerusalem will be restored as the eternal capital of the Palestinian people and its independent State once and for all.

The dream of the late King Faisal Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud to pray in the Al-Aqsa Mosque has become the dream of his brothers and his people. Today that dream belongs to all Saudis, foremost among them King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, the monarch who launched the historic message for dialogue among all peoples, cultures and religions. That message is represented by Jerusalem, with all its mosques, churches and synagogues. It is a city that is a real embodiment of that message as it breaks the shackles of occupation, persecution and racism.

Let us thank all those who voted for resolution 67/19, those who took their rightful place among the supporters of right and justice. We hope that others will realize that they must board the train of history. They must start work on accepting the application by

Palestine for full membership in the United Nations. They have to end the occupation, bring about peace and achieve Palestine's full independence, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions, which are legitimate and legal.

Mr. Alrowaiei (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured to convey the congratulations of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the brotherly people of Palestine on the occasion of adoption of resolution 67/19, which granted Palestine non-member State status in the United Nations by an overwhelming majority. That reflects the support of the international community for the Palestinian application and its solidarity with the Palestinian people in standing against the occupation and pursuing its national aspirations to achieve the right to self-determination and an independent State, with sovereignty over its national soil and with East Jerusalem as its capital. On this occasion, we would like to pay tribute to the great efforts of the leadership of the Palestinian people and President Mahmoud Abbas.

On the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, His Majesty King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa, the Amir of Bahrain, sends a message in which he states that this important occasion reminds us all of the permanent responsibility of the United Nations vis-à-vis the Palestinian people. The Organization must resolve the Palestinian issue peacefully in all its aspects, in a just and comprehensive way and in accordance with the relevant international resolutions.

On this occasion, we renew our commitment, as the international community, to our special responsibility to the Palestinian people to right the injustices that have befallen them since 1948. It is an occasion that embodies the commitment of the international community to ending the Israeli occupation and to supporting the Palestinian people in achieving their inalienable legal rights and in their fight to achieve freedom and independence and to exercise their legitimate right to self-determination, to return to their land and to establish an independent country, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Bahrain today renews its support for the just cause of the Palestinian people and calls for the implementation of the international resolutions aimed at establishing an independent Palestinian State. In that connection, we would like to express our thanks and appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chairman, Mr. Abdou Salam Diallo, for their efforts to end the illegal Israeli occupation and establish an independent Palestinian State. We express our appreciation to the Committee for monitoring the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the many political developments concerning the Palestinian question. We also thank it for its tireless efforts to raise awareness, through programmes, activities and international conferences and meetings, of the importance of the Palestinian people being able to exercise their inalienable rights. We also pay tribute to the Department of Public Information for its special information programme on the question of Palestine.

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is 29 November, which is the same day that the Palestine Partition Plan was adopted under resolution 181 (II), of 1947. In 1977, the General Assembly decided to celebrate this day every year, recalling to us the importance of righting the injustices that the Palestinian people face and have faced for six decades. In that context, we would like to express our solidarity with the Palestinian people in standing against the occupation until the Palestinians achieve their national aspirations and their inalienable rights. We reiterate our support for Palestine's application, on 23 September 2011, to be accepted as a full Member of the United Nations so that the Palestinian people can finally exercise their legitimate rights.

A just, comprehensive and permanent peace is a strategic choice. It will require the full implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions, other relevant agreements, the Madrid terms of reference, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the principle of land for peace, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): At the outset, please allow me to express our appreciation to the President for convening this discussion on the question of Palestine in the General Assembly. I also would like to thank the President of Palestine, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, for his statement yesterday (see A/67/PV.44).

I would like to congratulate the leadership and people of Palestine on the upgrading of Palestine's status in the General Assembly to non-member observer State. While we have long supported the aspirations of the Palestinian people and leadership for full membership in the United Nations, the vote

yesterday in the Assembly was an important milestone towards that goal.

The Arab world has been undergoing unprecedented transformation during the past two years. The democratic aspirations of people in several countries are being addressed through national political processes. However, it is regrettable that the Palestinian question and the related Arab-Israeli issues have largely remained unaddressed and unresolved. Also, the Palestinian application for full membership in the United Nations, submitted more than a year ago, has not evinced any positive action from the Security Council, despite overwhelming support from the Member States.

For more than two years now, there have been no direct talks between Israel and Palestine. Meanwhile, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories has been deteriorating due to settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Those activities are creating new realities on the ground and threaten the very premise of a two-State solution. Settlements, roadblocks and the related infrastructure of occupation have also exacerbated the humanitarian problems of the Palestinian people and are adversely affecting the normal functioning of Palestinian state institutions. The Palestinian Authority is also facing a severe financial crisis that could erode the significant progress made by the Palestinian Authority in building state institutions.

The blockade of Gaza has entered its sixth year and is causing severe hardship to the population. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, and essential services, economic activities and infrastructure development have been disrupted. We strongly condemn the violence and deeply regret the loss of human lives during the recent hostilities. We hope that both parties will uphold the ceasefire agreement and implement its provisions in good faith.

We hope that the adoption yesterday of resolution 67/19 will pave the way for the resumption of serious, direct talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis. India has a long history of solidarity with the Palestinian people. India was the first non-Arab country to recognize the State of Palestine nearly 25 years ago. In his message to the friendly people of Palestine on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, our Prime Minister, Mr. Manmohan Singh, reiterated India's unwavering support for the Palestinian people's struggle for a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and internationally recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet road map and relevant Security Council resolutions.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate India's continued support for the Palestinian cause.

Mr. Laram (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured, at the outset, to congratulate President Mahmoud Abbas and the brotherly Palestinian people on taking a first step, long awaited by the Palestinian people and a large part of the world, in acquiring an upgraded representation in the United Nations through the adoption of resolution 67/19. I want to express our pleasure in that historic achievement at a time when there is great international support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to end the Israeli occupation and to establish an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. I also want to reiterate our unwavering support for the Palestinian cause and our resolve to stand side by side with the Palestinian people until the injustice under which they have suffered for more than six decades is ended.

The large number of countries that voted in favour of the State of Palestine sent a message to the entire international community that there is unprecedented international unanimity in favour of realizing the rights of the Palestinian people and enabling the Palestinians, who have suffered for so many decades, to establish their independent State and to live in dignity within borders recognized by international law.

In that context, Qatar reaffirms that the continued Israeli military occupation and Israel's persistence in its settlement policy are the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel commits the worst kind of human rights violations against a defenceless, persecuted people. Israel's claim that it fights terrorism is false. Israel is an occupying Power, and the right to fight an occupation is a legal right and cannot be equated with the military aggression of the forces.

In that connection, we condemn the Israeli aggression against Gaza two weeks ago, which claimed the lives of more than 168 people and injured hundreds of innocent civilians. In that regard, we call upon the international community to assume its full responsibility and to deal firmly with the Israeli Government by compelling it to end the siege imposed on Gaza and to refrain from any military operations

against the defenceless populations in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip.

Israel, the occupying Power, continues to build the separation wall, which undermines the human rights of hundred of thousands of Palestinians. Israel also continues to desecrate Islamic shrines, especially the Al-Aqsa Mosque, while allowing extremist settlers to commit aggression against it and those praying there. It expels Muslim and Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem from the city, giving their homes to Jewish settlers, in an attempt to change the Arab, Muslim and Christian character of Jerusalem. Like all Islamic and Arab countries, Qatar condemns those policies, which undermine the chances for a comprehensive and lasting peace.

The Israeli occupation authorities continue their settlement policy, paying absolutely no heed to the calls of the international community to end the policy, which undermines the chance for a just peace based on two States, the State of Palestine and the State of Israel, living side by side. In that respect, we reaffirm that the main condition for the success of any negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli occupation authority is an immediate end to settlement activities, and not their mere suspension, as some countries call for.

Israeli policies, whether with respect to Jerusalem, illegal settlements, the separation apartheid wall, detentions or the use of force on every occasion, confirm collectively that there is no good will on Israel's part, and belie the security pretext that Israel invokes to reject peace based on international law. We reiterate that measures taken by the Israeli authorities to Judaize Jerusalem and to change the Islamic and Arab character of the holy city are null and void and without legal basis.

Israel's continued illegal practices against the Palestinian people living under occupation exacerbate the security situation in the area and undermine the prospects for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. Qatar reaffirms that there can be no normal relations between Israel and the Arab countries until Israel complies with international law and respects the principle of land for peace, which has been the basis for the negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis since the Madrid Conference in 1991.

Qatar also affirms that the only way to enable upcoming negotiations to reach a successful outcome is for Israel to stop all settlement activities immediately and abide by international law. It is morally reprehensible that some countries still pressure Palestinians to return to the negotiating table, putting the blame on them, while ignoring the main reason for the failure of every attempt to revive negotiations, which is the absence of goodwill on the part of Israel and its ongoing flouting of all relevant United Nations resolutions by making no move towards ending its occupation of Palestine.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Chullikatt (Holy See): Yesterday, the General Assembly gave majority approval to resolution 67/19, by which Palestine was accorded non-member observer State status in the United Nations. The Holy See actively followed the steps that led to this important decision, while striving to remain neutral between the parties and to act in accordance with its nature and universal mission, as well as in consideration of its specific focus on the ethical dimension of international problems.

The Holy See considers, moreover, that yesterday's vote should be placed in the context of the efforts to find a definitive solution, with the support of the international community, to the question already dealt with in resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947. That document is the juridical basis for the existence of two States, one of which has not materialized during the subsequent 65 years, while the other has already seen the light of day.

On 15 May 2009, while leaving from Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv at the conclusion of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Pope Benedict XVI expressed the following:

> "No more bloodshed! No more fighting! No more terrorism! No more war! Instead, let us break the vicious circle of violence. Let there be lasting peace based on justice; let there be genuine reconciliation and healing. Let it be universally recognized that the State of Israel has the right to exist, and to enjoy peace and security within internationally agreed borders. Let it be likewise acknowledged that the Palestinian people have a right to a sovereign independent homeland, to live with dignity and to travel freely. Let the two-State solution become a reality, not remain a dream."

In the wake of that appeal, the Holy See's Secretary for Relations with States, Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, speaking before the General Assembly in 2011, expressed the hope that the competent bodies of the United Nations would adopt a decision that would help give concrete implementation to that goal (see A/66/PV.28).

Yesterday's vote expresses the sentiment of the majority of the international community and recognizes a more significant presence for Palestine within the United Nations. At the same time, it is the conviction of the Holy See that the result does not constitute per se a sufficient solution to the existing problems in the region, which in fact can find an adequate response only through an effective commitment to building peace and stability, through justice and through respect for the legitimate aspirations of both the Israelis and the Palestinians.

At various times, therefore, the Holy See has invited the leaders of both peoples to restart the negotiations in good faith and to avoid actions or setting conditions that contradict the declarations of goodwill and the sincere search for solutions that could become secure foundations for a lasting peace. The Holy See has also often made urgent appeals to the international community to increase its commitment and encourage its creativity by adopting suitable initiatives that could help to achieve a lasting peace that respects the rights of Israelis and Palestinians. Peace demands courageous decisions.

Considering the outcome of yesterday's vote in the Assembly, and to encourage the international community, and in particular the parties directly concerned, to take concrete action aimed at achieving the objectives I mentioned, the Holy See welcomes resolution 67/19, whereby Palestine has become a non-member observer State of the United Nations.

This is also a propitious occasion to recall the common position that the Holy See and the Palestinian Liberation Organization expressed in the Basic Agreement of 15 February 2000, with the aim of supporting the recognition of internationally guaranteed special status for the city of Jerusalem, and in particular of safeguarding freedom of religion and conscience, Jerusalem's identity and sacred character as a holy city, and respect for and freedom of access to its holy places.

The Acting President: In accordance with resolution 477 (V), of 1 November 1950, I now give the floor to the observer of the League of Arab States.

Mr. Fathalla (League of Arab States) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to send a message of congratulations from this rostrum to the Palestinian people on their attainment of non-member observer State status at the United Nations. That was an historic event, and it was even more important because the General Assembly expressed its will on the very day that the world celebrated its solidarity with the Palestinian people. It also highlights once more the solidarity of the international community, represented by the General Assembly, with them. The message sent by the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an integral part of the discussion on agenda item 37, entitled "Question of Palestine".

The adoption yesterday of resolution 67/19 advanced the question of Palestine, which has now become a non-member observer State. This is a serious and important step towards rectifying the errors made over 65 years of failure, during which the international community has not been able to arrive at a just and comprehensive solution for the Palestinian cause. This is one of the fundamental issues of the United Nations, on which many resolutions have been adopted by all the organs and agencies of our international Organization, including the General Assembly, .

The recognition of that failure is a first step forward, and the Assembly was able to adopt a resolution on a just solution to the Palestine question. However, while we have not been able to move forward with a two-State solution, which has always been recognized as the ultimate goal, an acknowledgement of the failure to implement that solution is the beginning of success, as I have said. For that reason, the adoption of resolution 67/19 was in and of itself a measure in the process of implementing a two-State solution in its recognition of Palestine as a non-member observer State in the United Nations.

The resolution rectifies part of the historic injustice that Palestinians have been subjected to, and contributes to the implementation of resolution 181 (II), adopted in 1947. Subsequent resolutions have recalled that the solution must be based on the creation of two States. The resolution lays the legal foundation for and

connection between a people and their territory, within the framework of the legal concept of a State whose people have been living on its territory with no legal link to that territory; it has thus been inhabited by a people without any acknowledgement of the connection between it and them.

The adoption of the resolution by the Assembly was the culmination of the desire of Member States to continue to promote what is right and to ensure that the purposes and principles of the Organization, including Article 1 of the Charter, come to fruition. As envisioned by the founders of the Organization, the Charter calls for respect for the right of peoples to self-determination.

The upgraded status of Palestine, as promoted by the resolution, will facilitate negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Those negotiations will take place between two States recognized by the United Nations, and not between a State and an Authority. Those two States will be accountable to the international community, represented by the United Nations within the framework of the principle of international responsibility and in conformity with the provisions of international law.

To conclude, I reiterate that today is a new day for finding a just, comprehensive and timely solution to the question of Palestine and the situation of the Middle East as a whole, so that its peoples can live in peace and security and realize their aspirations. The United Nations should take as a point of departure the resolution adopted yesterday, so that Palestine can become an independent sovereign State on its own territory, living in peace within internationally recognized borders with its neighbours. That will enable Palestine to join as a full fledged Member of the United Nations, alongside all of the neighbouring countries of its region and throughout the world.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Members are informed that action on draft resolutions A/67/L.17, A/67/L.18, A/67/L.19 and A/67/L.20 will be taken immediately after the debate on agenda item 36.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 37.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.